

North Carolina

Schools Embrace Evidence-Based Making a Difference HIV Prevention Curriculum

Public Health Problem

In North Carolina, the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 52.2 percent of high school students had ever had sexual intercourse. Of those students, 17.1 percent had had sex with four or more people. Also, in 2003, while just fewer than three percent of HIV disease reports were found among teenagers aged 13 to 19, the percentage increased to almost 12 percent of all cases when 20 to 24 year-olds were included. Additionally the rate for gonorrhea in 13 to 19 year-olds was 514.4 (per 100,000) and the rate for chlamydia in the same age group was 1327.3.

Taking Action

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Healthy Schools Initiative funds the North Carolina Comprehensive School Health Training Center. The Center developed and provides training for Making a Difference, an evidence-based HIV-prevention curriculum. The curricula were aligned with the North Carolina Healthful Living Standard Course of Study and met the state basic education guidelines. During an eighteen month period starting in March of 2003, 31 of the 117 school systems in North Carolina participated in a two-day, Making a Difference Training. This represents 26 percent of the school systems in North Carolina. Fourteen of the school systems trained their entire middle school health teacher staff. Several school systems have received additional curricula training for their local boards of education, school administrators, and parents. An in-depth evaluation was conducted with one school system to look at implementation. Within three months of the spring training, 61 percent of the teachers had implemented the curriculum in their classrooms.

A research study of Making a Difference provided evidence that the curricula works. In the study, sixth and seventh grade African-American students were stratified by gender and age and randomly assigned to receive one of three, eight hour curricula. The participants who received the Making a Difference curricula were less likely than the control group to report having sexual intercourse in the three months after the intervention. The curriculum also delayed sexual experience among virgins. Adolescents who received Making a Difference believed more strongly that practicing abstinence would prevent pregnancy and AIDS.

Implications and Impact

A 2003 telephone survey of North Carolina parents of school-aged students found that 91.5 percent of parents surveyed supported teaching age-appropriate sexuality education in schools. Parents overwhelmingly supported including HIV/STD and teen pregnancy prevention as part of sexuality education. Through the implementation of the evidence-based HIV-prevention curricula, Making a Difference, North Carolina is meeting the expectations of its parents and preparing students to negotiate the pressures of having early sexual experiences, which could lead to HIV infection.

Contact Information

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Education Bldg., 301 North Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2825
Phone: 919-807-3826 www.nchealthyschools.org
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/exemplary>